

REWRITE



The Magazine of Effective Writing

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HOW DO YOU GET EMOTION?

What is emotion? It is one of the essential elements in every story. In every article, poem or essay. Whenever you attempt to communicate a thought, or ideas to readers, you must have an intellectual purpose. But this alone will not interest them. The emotionalized feeling that you put into the purpose, and the projection of it into your reader's mind, is the real glue that makes it stick. That is the secret of "memorability."

What is emotion? The dictionary says it's the sense of agitation, of being stirred up by something that stimulates one. The word "feeling" is often contrasted with the word "judgment". The emotional as against the intellectual, those two strands that writers, in every age, have had to braid together to effect their purposes in writing. "Passion" is one extreme, where emotion rather than a strong intellectual concept upsets the even balance between the two elements. The word "sentiment" on the other hand represents an extreme of judgment. And "sentimental" means that the judgment is there, but it has been permitted to deteriorate, or is simplified. It has been swayed by the emotions into exaggeration.

These are the fine points of emotion. But how do you use it, get it to serve you? The first fact of course is to think through an idea. You cannot just feel or be swept away by the sheer thrill of the story, as readers sometimes do. You must feel strongly and be able to project that feeling into the minds and hearts of your readers. But in order to do that you must be able to detach yourself sufficiently from your body and senses, and even your mind, so that you see why you are feeling and thinking as you do, when you experience something. That sounds rather cold and over-analytical. But it is a fact. And actually, you must go even further. A good story-teller not only thinks through experience, but he keeps his eye on his readers. He thinks in terms of the theoretical. So he says to himself: "If I frame up this situation in this way, will it click? Will it do what I want it to? Is it plausible to think that readers will react (think and feel) in this way?"

Careful strategic analysis of this kind is inescapable. It is why I constantly make it plain to writers that commercial writing is deadly serious business. It is one thing to write for fun, it is another to be forced to earn a living in this way in one of the most competitive fields. But here is a thought that will perhaps buck you up. If you planned to write your stories in this cold-blooded way alone, you would almost certainly fail, because it takes emotion as well as intellect to write a really effective, affecting sto-

story. A human body is not just bones and a mind. It is nerves and senses and feelings. Similarly, the most important part of every "story" is what you put into it of yourself. What you saw and heard and thought and felt. Most of all felt so strongly that you had to rush to your desk and set it down unforgettably in words. That is one thing about this God-given job of writing: it is possible to make a synthetic soap, or silk or metal and plastic that is "just as good" as nature's. But the minute you try cold-bloodedly to invent a synthetic story, built to all "sure-fire" specifications of a best-seller, something of the "spirit" is lost. Intangible, impalpable, it must be felt by the artist to be really there in his picture or "story".

That is why few writers go at the task as cold-bloodedly as I have indicated above. A great many more writers do their analyzing, their strategic planning, instinctively. As their minds and hearts begin to "feel" that latest story creeping up on them, the skill and craftsmanship they have built up laboriously through painstaking practice, begins to take hold; the blood races through their imaginative sensibilities and the job of accepting and rejecting, of building the story commences. But this serious reaction to a story's possibilities is a far cry from the rash act of crossing one's fingers, sitting down at one's typewriter and hoping that in some strange, fortuitous way the story will come out all right. Visibly or not, a writer thinks out and feels out his story every time he sits down to write. And when he overlooks this process in his eagerness or his naivete, he gets into hot water.

One of the best ways to get emotion into a ms. is first, to see clearly how you "feel" about it and what is the best way to handle it to hit readers. (This can be a wonderfully satisfying emotional experience in itself, if you approach it in the right spirit.) And second, get inside your main character. See accurately how he feels about the situation into which you have plunged him. Most writers do not do half enough work right here in this second step. You can never know enough about your people. Get inside each of them. Pretend you are each of them in turn. What does it feel like to be in their shoes?

Finally, use words that are emotionalized. A very few persons are cold and unemotional. They should not try to be writers. But most of you by a little study can see the difference between words that are warm and cold. A word like "hard" or "brave" somehow packs a feeling of the characteristic it describes. Words that express visually or in terms of a sound or smell the trait they describe, are always better than the purely scientific or intellectual. Learn to exaggerate subtly, as "A brimming, steaming cup of java." Get it?

REWRITE

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MAKE William E. Harris, **CLEAN UP**
THE U.N. Elva Ray Harris, **AMERICAN**
REALLY WORK! Editors, **POLITICS**

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A FAITH TO LIVE BY

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, with liberty & justice for all."

Last night I listened to an overseas broadcast by individuals, all members of the Air Force, at advanced bases in Southern Japan & Korea. True, it was probably the dreamed-up idea of some P. R. O. But to those of us who believe in democracy and freedom and decency, it was moving. The one thing all those men, officers and G. I. Joes, said in their own homely way was: "Tell the folks back home to back us up."

REWRITE believes in this month when we celebrate our national independence, the folks back home in these United States can do nothing more patriotic, or practical, than making a new Declaration of Independence against all the unpatriotic waste, the reckless political finegling and corruption, the tolerance of immoral and unethical, even if perfectly legal, practices to advance the greedy, thoughtless ambitions of selfish men in and out of public office.

If we are adequately to backup

BLUNT STATEMENT: The greatest single danger confronting Americans is inflation. If we continue to let the government over-spend and over-borrow, all savings and the government itself, as we have known it, will disappear. There is no evidence that the administration either appreciates the danger or intends to do anything effective about it. Inflation is rather pleasant for those in power. Some in government who understand how inflation can destroy may encourage it, because they want to see freedom taken away from the people.

When money loses enough of its value, all sorts of chaos follow. In their troubles the people demand that government do something. That's when the fellows who want government to have all power (and who hope to be the government) get their chance.

No help from Uncle

Each time the heavy rains came, debris and topsoil from upstream washed down the Little Kanawha River, caught in trees and brush along the banks and formed a dam near Glenville, W. Va. (pop. 2,000). Damage often ran to \$25,000.

Fed up, Glenville decided to start its own flood control. Door-to-door canvassing produced \$2,500. Local industries lent equipment. Finally, late last month, more than 300 townspeople cleared the banks with scythes and axes, a job which normally would have cost \$10,000. There was even money left to clear upstream banks, as added insurance.

"What pleased me," said A. C. Spurr, president of the Monongahela Power Co., which helped organize the drive, "was that these people knew the meaning of self-help. They didn't just wait for 'the Government' to do something."

PATHFINDER

the men who are giving their lives to "make democracy work," the one unchallengeable article we need above all others is a dynamic faith in the things we believe in. It must be so positive that we here at home inevitably will act, to show ourselves and neighbors that we are not just talking about liberty and justice and decency. On the contrary we want it so much that we will devote ourselves and all our energy and imagination to achieving it. Let us make no mistake, nor let the world around us make the mistake of not realizing that no civilization can continue to exist half slave and half free. Let us stop the shilly-shallying. Let us act—like free, decent men, or sell out to the crooks and gangsters and dictators at home and else where. There can be no half-way compromise.

The second vital weapon we need is awareness of the "meaning of self-help." We must and can forge our own destiny. By standing shoulder to shoulder, by knowing what we desire and working hard for it, we can have a free world, a world free of backbreaking, unendurable taxes to support crooked politicians in tyranny and chicanery. Adequate defense and sinful waste, the spoils of power and corruption, are not two sides of a single coin. Because we export gangster films, and our press, radio & TV spew a similar type of entertainment from their entrails throughout the day and night, the heart of America is not rotten.

In order to achieve the things we want in life, the goals and ideals, we need straight thinking and clear-eyed, logical planning. Price and wage controls are a cruel joke, a political palliative, so long as the Government itself continually violates them. The greatest single cause of "inflation", which is only an equivocation for cheapened money, is the Government's continued policy of deficit financing and unwillingness to set a ceiling on expenditure of its citizens' private incomes. Defense spending, no matter how large or how prolonged over the years, can only postpone, and render more painful the ultimate day of reckoning.

We must stop kidding ourselves, stop making a joke of a dreadful catastrophe, stop such foolish and illogical nonsense as the thought that we can lick inflation by not building homes in the face of the rapidly rising population. Or that in the face of an ever-increasing need for water we can continue to pollute diminishing available supplies. Or waste our natural supplies of men & materials in warfare. It is time we grew up, and acted like men. Like mature men.

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FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

ETHICS ARE A PROTECTION

Poets and writers need to live by a code of "ethics", just as surely as practitioners of other professions do. What would the medical profession be like if there was no Hippocratic oath, or no gentlemanly agreements about snatching patients, splitting fees, revealing confidences, and many other ethical problems? It would soon disintegrate to a point where doctors would not be consulted except in a supreme hour of need. Poets and writers can do themselves harm, too, if they ignore the ethics of their craft.

But first, what are the ethics that a poet should practice? The first and most obvious rule of conduct is this:

Never submit the same poem to two different publications simultaneously. It sounds elementary, but you'd be surprised at the people who do it. Just recently, a poet who sells widely had to write us concerning a poem we had selected for workshop discussion. Very regretfully she informed us that she'd sold it elsewhere. Fortunately, we had time prior to publication to pull it and thus avoid embarrassment all around. We would not have liked too well getting a second hand poem & think how the other editor might have felt. Suppose he were to see the poem he had liked well enough to buy, and perhaps even feature, being dissected in a workshop. That poet nearly got in bad with two editors.

The second rule follows naturally after the first.

Don't submit a poem which has been previously published, to another publication without telling the editor its history. A member of the WCS Family narrowly escaped some trouble on this count. She did it unthinkingly and had her poem accepted for the second time. Neither publication paid, so at first she felt that she had a right to resubmit. But her own wise head and her conscience eventually went to work and she told each of the editors the story. All is now forgiven, and the poem will be printed in the second, not a reprint, magazine because the two magazines circulate among different reader group sections of the field. Also because the second editor liked the poem and the poet's essential honesty.

The thing to be learned from this experience is that it is poor policy to insult an editor. Whether or not he is able to pay for contributions, he likes to feel that you've considered his magazine a bona fide market, a worthwhile outlet for your poetry. If you allow him to use a poem, and then without any word place it elsewhere, merely giving him a credit line, it is tantamount to passing him by and ignoring him. Nobody likes to be ig-

nored. But you will be in even less favor if the second editor discovers he is playing second fiddle. Even a magazine with a smallish circulation does get around, and the chance is great that the editor will be informed of his second hand material by some reader. And this is not the end of the matter—that two editors are displeased. Editors are like the proverbial housewife. They talk over the back fence on occasion.

A third rule of conduct for the poet is to be strictly and honestly original. We've had complaints from writers that certain others (not only poets) are "following" them "around too closely". Snatching ideas and rephrasing articles and poems does not do anyone good. It is one of the quickest ways to get on the blacklist of an editor. If he cannot have a complete and absolute faith in your honesty he will be forced to reject you, because he just hasn't time to check and recheck every ms. he uses against all that has been written on the subject. Besides, many obscure or inconspicuous magazines are just not available to him.

Recently a poet stated to us that another poet had on three occasions paraphrased her poems and placed them in another publication. A second correspondent told us that a timely article subject and pictures had actually been "stolen" from him. And a very widely published garden writer has observed her ideas being taken by another garden columnist.

It is likely that these things may possibly have been noticed by editors as well as the injured parties. In at least one case we know that they have. Most editors read each competing magazine in their field, and also a large number of the newspaper columns, if there are any that overlap. As a matter for further enlightenment of possible transgressors, we have sometimes had to write a letter to an editor, to try to get an author reinstated in an editor's good graces. It does not pay in the long run to "borrow" ideas.

A fourth point in a poet's code of ethics should be a determination to do nothing that will cheapen his art. If you send poor, unsuitable writing to an editor ten times, how can you expect him to be interested even in looking at the eleventh ms. you send him, no matter how good it may be? If you allow your work to be printed, whether at your expense or not, in a periodical or by a "publisher" who displays no discrimination, what are the chances that discriminating editors will be eager to look at your stuff?

Many writers seem to think that any placement of any ms. in print is a step ahead, & represents good publicity. It is not. When you send second rate stuff to low pay magazines and congratulate yourself on "getting rid of it", you are cheapening your art. In a sense you are doing the same thing if you patronize the editors of small magazines by

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throwing them the rejected crumbs from some more important book. It is one thing not to let yourself be "used"; it is another selfishly and unmercifully to use an editor for your own greedy or vainglorious purposes. A ms. can be rejected because it is not suitable or lacks the polished writing required by top markets. But it can also be rejected because an editor considers it sleazy, sloppy thinking and loose, wordy writing. When you send out a ms. always stop to think for a moment whether it is the best you can do at the moment. If your conscience tells you it is in your opinion merely "good enough" for editor so-and-so, put it back in the drawer and wait till you have an opportunity to revise it. No matter how badly you need money never cheapen your art, never prostitute the personality you present to the world.

Ethics are a means of self-protection when you practice them. Not only do they protect the editors and publishers you deal with, but also your fellow poets and yourself. They protect and render more secure that "secret sense of self-importance" without which the late John Galsworthy has assured us, none of us can endure to live. In a word, they help you to live your faith and to take your rightful place in the world of men and God.

Poetry Workshop Notes. Remember that we're now paying \$1 for all poems used in the Workshop. It isn't much, but with the analysis, the friendly criticism by other poets & the reader response, it is something.

You do not need to be a REWRITE subscriber to contribute, but you do have to criticize constructively the current workshop poem. As you give of your time and interest in helping others, you will gain yourself.

Return, Stamped Envelops. A number of poems were sent in without return postage. We hold these temporarily, then destroy them. I cannot return poems for which no postage is enclosed. On the other hand on those that I do return, I try whenever possible to write a brief scribble of comment and encouraging help.

SOME NEWS IN BRIEF

The PRAIRIE FARMER, which has deleted its address from its rejection slip, states its material is "practically all prepared by our own staff".

Philosophical Library. Dagobert D. Runes, 8 West 40th St., NYC 18, has set up an independent subsidiary, LIBRARY PUBLISHERS, Martin I. Wolf, for the publication of historical, literary and biographical Americana—with emphasis on available documents of the 18th & 19th Centuries.

"Notable Cross-Examinations", edited by a lawyer and carrying a foreword on "The Art of Cross-Examination" by The Rt. Hon. Sir Travers Humphreys, should be a book of interest-

ing value for writers. It is published by the Macmillan Company and contains specific examples of courtroom duels such as the battle between the artist, Whistler and the Attorney General of that day; W.S. Gilbert v. The Era; the Belsen Trial and the duel engaged in by Clarence Darrow & William Jennings Bryan. There are 20 trials represented altogether. It should be an interesting study in plotting, dialogue, and the condensation required by "good theater".

THOUGHT & ACTION (See; P. 15), has become a mimeo magazine and increased its size.

THE WRITER AND THE CRITIC

We had the privilege and the unusual opportunity this month of reading in galleyproof Herschel Brickell's introduction to the new O. Henry Prize Stories (the annual memorial, published in book form and to be issued this year during the UNH Conference, August 23rd). The stories not being present, it was a bit like analyzing a murder with no corpse present. As a result, we gained a rather unique perspective on this whole business of judging what is "best" each year in literature. "Uncle" Herschel, as he is familiarly known by our Billy 'Gee, himself comments a little sadly & wryly that, "Some may say better stories were left out than were included," because of the "best stories" left out, since they were too long, or the striking numbers of "first-rate" stories, too many for editors of anthologies to publish.

The first thing that struck us was the essential difference between what the judges & Mr. & Mrs. Brickell on the one hand, and we at WCS on the other, are doing. Basically, they are "tasters", discriminating tasters, required to set up a convenient or comfortable yardstick by which lay readers may tag the creative work of writers. (It is interesting to note of the three judges, who are Nancy Hale, Joseph Henry Jackson & Mark Van Doren, only one is a full time creative writer (Nancy Hale). Mr. Jackson is primarily a book and radio columnist, while Mr. Van Doren divides his time between creative work & criticism and teaching.) Now it is a truism, that writers rarely make good critics & vice versa, critics seldom combine that creative faculty that is the base for story-telling.

Without in the least implying invidious comparisons, it came to me rather forcefully & graphically, that these judges are required to evaluate stories after they are finished. We at WCS on the other hand estimate I hope creatively, the stories we work on before a reader or even an editor has seen them. They are still in the womb of the author, to use an image of nature. Having earned my living for nearly 15 years as a critic, it is perhaps not improper for me to say that in one sense while I recognize the need for evaluating works of art, post facto criticism has increasingly left me cold. Even the best of criticism is in the final analysis personal

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opinion. There never was a "perfect" story, if only because the act of creation is never complete. An author can always find ways to improve a story. Even Nature is continually refining, polishing, and creating a new and better species. There is only one enduring truth: life (growth) and death (decay). We continually live it in our maturing wisdom or our failure to move forward.

And so I return to the credo to which we, at WCS are humbly dedicated. We do not criticize stories in the ordinary sense. We recognize that there is only one judgment on a story. And the seeds of that lie within the story itself, not in the mind, or the heart, of a critic sitting in judgment on the outside. That judgment we recognize is the impact a story achieves on its readers. There can be no perfect story, for there are millions of readers and for each the impact must inevitably be different. Moreover, each story must be fortunate in its timing. The perfect story can so easily be published in the wrong magazine, or at the wrong time. Beethoven, Wagner, many writers of what we condescend to call the "classics", were the victims of an indifferent public while they lived and suffered. All that any writer can do is to live his faith in his creative gift, understand it as best he can, learn whatever he can from whatever source (including critics) & then grow, above all else, grow as a writer and a human being. Good stories aren't "lost".

We do not criticize stories, and we often advise writers to beware the services of the "critic-agents" who do. What we try to do is to aid writers to give birth to a story with as much imaginative concern as they should give to the "birthing" of a child. It must have its place in the world and its opportunity to express its unique thought, act or deed which is its gift to all the rest of mankind. The same is true with any story, article or poem. It ought to have its chance to hit that reader for which it's meant. This, obviously, is very different from mere slanting a story; from commercial writing for money. It is an act of faith and joy and hope, done with fidelity. Whether it achieves a large check or a gold medal or inclusion in an anthology matters little so long as the writer and his creative mid-wife remain loyal to their purpose.

We feel, naturally, that the best writing is not done in an ivory tower. We feel that the true province of the creative critic is not simply to evaluate, but to seek to bring the writer and reader together. And where a public does not exist for a certain type of story, to help the writer so write that before too long there may perhaps evolve that necessary public. Those who nurtured and encouraged the young Eugene O'Neill, for example, fulfilled such a useful mission. That probably was the greatest gift that Prof. G. P. Baker performed as a teacher. Without him we might not have had O'Neill and certainly not Philip Barry and Thomas Wolfe. Maxwell

E. Perkins, that great giant of an editor at Scribners', who nurtured so many writers, is another example of what I mean.

There has always been antagonism, and there probably always will be, between writers and critics. No less an author than George Bernard Shaw (who was himself once a critic, & earned his living doing it!) jibed cleverly but superficially, that "Those who know how, do, and those who don't, teach." Critics are very necessary, if only to explain why some of the bad stories that appear in print, do get published. (A facetious wag once remarked that there should be critics of critics, so that lay readers would be able to understand why some of the "bad" (to them) tales get printed in the anthologies.)

The point is, however, that writers ought to appreciate much more than they do the finality of all the criticism bundled up in the readers' judgment of any specific story. An author may be a bestseller in his day, or he may be, like Joseph Conrad, widely read for a time, then largely forgotten. Styles and even fashion among story-tellers and critics alike may come and go. But the rare writers who write for eternity, are those men & women who combine greatness of soul with loving skill in a chosen profession. They are lovers of all mankind. They do not measure, analyze and fit to a preconceived scale, or a growing knowledge and fondness of literature. They are writers who have made a loving study of the human heart. The readers—for whom they write, but never "slant," are a

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News & Views

Mrs. Millien Stickney, Lone Pine Farm, in Charlestown, N. H., has recovered apparently in a miraculous manner from a major operation. Although past the age when many persons retire, she gamely had her column that is syndicated in a number of N.H. & Vermont newspapers written up nine weeks ahead, and now is busily grinding it out again despite medical injunctions to take a year off.

New Social Security Coverage for writers, self-employed, etc. I confess after studying government booklets and impartial analyses, I cannot help looking at the new retirement insurance for writers and self-employed persons with a jaundiced eye. For one thing, I can't imagine any writer or creative person wanting to retire at 65. If they do, they'll have to supplement the tiny income allotted them with some form of private income. And how many writers make enough money to build a large invested capital. Moreover, if they continue to practice their profession & earn more than \$600 a year, all the taxes, which they have paid earlier, will be retained by the government and their rightful insurance income will not be issued. Thus, in the case of many small writers it will be an instance of "You can't live with it and you can't live without it." Thus it looks to me as if many writers would never collect their social se

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curity, because the Government makes no bones of the fact that eventually it desires every form of earning to be "covered". Therefore, if the \$600 limitation still prevails, you'll be forced to retire and twiddle your thumbs or forego the meager income you have paid a tax for all your working days. If that happens, the politicians will reap a rich harvest of taxing you possibly twice & guaranteeing a big pool to cover their extravagant use of your money.

REWRITE favors strongly some practical, economically sound method of insuring people against the crippling effects of old age. It is a fact that the ability of science, which has been so successful in lengthening the average person's life, has not been directed, strangely enough, toward solving the pressing problem of paying the cost of maintaining the aged. I have seen the lives of many too many young people warped and hopelessly withered because of the necessity of caring for some member of the elder generation. We all are devoted, or should be, to our parents. We can never do too much for those who have given us life. But that is no reason in this day and age for that life to be lived in misery and destitution. Or to have the promising career of some youngster forever blasted and his contribution to the betterment of the human race wiped out.

The present social security plan is probably a start in the right direction. But it needs to have many of the bugs & unnecessary, wasteful costs removed from it. At present it is intended more to make political jobs, to catch votes, than to solve a great, universal problem. It certainly is not adaptable to the needs of writers. As a matter of fact, we at WCS have already had a chance to watch its ineffectiveness and inelasticity. One of our students, with a family to support, became sorely in need of just such help as the social security plan could and should offer to one facing her unexpected emergency. Because she took hold of her problem courageously and in a spirit of carrying her load, she was penalized and denied even the small payments allotted to her.

There is a vast difference between a person earning a small, but fixed, salary, and free lance writer, who, like a baseball batter, may enjoy a run of good luck, and then go into a slump for several months. But red tape and regimentation cannot possibly meet such a situation flexibly. So, the writer is forced either to give up his profession, even though he may be making a real contribution to the world he lives in; or struggle, as best he can, subjecting his dependents to a great deal of untold misery. Possibly, a writer is not supposed to have dependents. A writer, however, like anyone else, may perhaps be successful over a period of years—until destiny decides to hit him. None of us can see around a corner. And one of the vital needs of our times is to be able to adjust, to adapt ourselves to individual cir-

cumstances, to the unexpected development. A government or corporation needs to do this, too, just as much as an individual, a writer responding to the challenge of life, and the emotional relations of his characters.. This is one of the weaknesses of social security. The rules are too rigid; we all are required to fit into the Procrustes bed, or else. That is the real weakness of a method and a philosophy that makes a government of more importance than the people it is meant to serve.

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profound and vital part of their materials. These authors not only have the adaptability to get inside their characters, but also the human understanding and compassion that enables them to get inside their readers, to comprehend the meaning of life itself, & to make their stories not just an entertaining means of "escape", but rather a component & vibrant part of life. The reader exclaims to himself not that this story is like life but that it is life. It becomes more real, more meaningful than his own confused existence. In the best sense of the word, a good critic accomplishes the same result. By making literature more understandable to us, he enables us to widen our experience and knowledge of life.

Too few of us, either as writers or critics, live on that exalted level as craftsmen. Yet it is easily within reach of all of us. All, that is, who have eyes and ears and enough imagination and desire to make what we do with words functional in the sense of it being a part of the living tissue of life & the world we live in. To me, the real pleasure and passion of writing only is achieved when we begin to study the relation of arts to its probable reader. "How will this read? How will it hit the reader? What meaning? Is it going to have any meaning for him? Is it watertight and logical? Is it 'human'?"

In this sense we are all critics eventually. Creative and constructive critics, as Elva continually insists upon. This means that criticism, to be worth anything, must be an integral part of the creative process. Like story-telling, it must not be practiced in an ivory tower. It must always be functional, alive, intimately related to the warp & woof of both writing and life. That is therefore, always the great danger of post factocriticism. The minute we begin to discuss literature, we commence to become the opposite of empirical. And continued extension to either extreme leads to error, even quackery, as the good "Dr. Webster" tells us. So, writers, whether you be writers or critics, seek ever to avoid the synthetic, the distillate, as you would the plague. Be the real thing.

It seems to us that as we have said in the past frequently, that in this guessing game, "Uncle" Herschel's anthology leads. And Nancy Hale this year has done much to enhance that close relation to writing and life.

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A WORD OR TWO ON AGENTS

We saw a copy of a magazine recently that is slanted at inexperienced writers who are trying to break in. It offers a "criticism" service by an advertising "critic-agent" on an individual coaching and selling basis at a fairly large sum of money per year.

When you analyze the details carefully you discover you have to buy a book & subscribe to the magazine. The big inducement in this case is that the magazine will buy stories, at 1¢ per word. Come to find out, though, it is published only quarterly (that means only 4 stories a year!) and the issue that we saw carries no date on the cover or even on the masthead! It is merely copyrighted as of 1951. Remember, too, that the fee has to be sent to the publisher, not the agent. Therefore, one may assume some kind of a contractual relationship. The magazine contains an assortment of reading notices spread through the editorial contents, urging readers to buy various articles of merchandise. There also is an adv. in which the critic-agent offers to read a full length ms. and criticize it, at a fee so low that it is palpably unrealistic and unfair to the critic. (It is a sad fact that in today's inflated market, critics' fees have not been raised one iota.)

An excellent editorial in the June 1st issue of WRITERS' NEWSLETTER warned writers against the misleading advertising of a literary agent, who insinuates he has an inside edge on selling pocket book rights. "These outfits," the editorial commented, regarding the reprint publishers, "have specific rates, and little bargaining can be done on price." Authors of books need agents to advise them on all rights, not to sell special rights.

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PRIZE CONTESTS OF THE MONTH

LIFE'S Contest for Young Photographers, Box 10, NYC 46, is open to anyone with a camera who is under 30 years of age. Entry blanks from above address. Full details in the May 21 issue.

Fiction Contest Editor, J.B. Lippincott Co., E. Washington Sq., Philadelphia 5, Pa., offers \$5,000 for an unfinished novel by some writer under 35. Closes: Dec. 31, 1951.

Wilcox & Follett Co., The C.W. Follett Award, 1255 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Ill., offers \$2,000 for a book ms. for children. Fiction or non-fiction. Closes: Aug. 1, 1951. Write for entry blank.

NEW BOOKS OF THE MONTH

IDEAS ON FILM. Ed. Cecile Starr. Funk & Wagnalls. \$4.50. A handbook on 16 mm. films. It has been prepared from articles and reviews previously used in the SAT. REVIEW OF LIT. A useful sourcebook of information both about the medium, the ideas it handles and availability of the films. Valuable to writers & teachers, who wish to know what's available on special subjects.

BOOKS OF PERMANENT WORTH

THE CRAFT OF THE SHORT STORY. Richard Summers. \$5.50. One of the most practical books on short story technique and the background of being a professional writer.

ARTICLE WRITING & MARKETING. George I. Bird. \$5.50. Companion book to the above. Exceptionally helpful. The author's students are selling. Both of these texts are standard in advanced courses on professional writing.

COLLIER'S BEST. Ed. Knox Burger. \$3.00. One of the best and ablest edited books on fiction for the big slicks. Burger who is COLLIER'S fiction editor, has written an introduction that every writer should read. You will understand your market and editors the better for doing so. The foreword to each of the stories, which in themselves are useful to the freelance, afford an interesting insight to the author's approach to his writing.

WRITERS ON WRITING. Ed. Herschel Brickell. \$3.00. An all around handbook written by UNH Conference staff members. Includes chapters by William E. Harris.

PICT DIGEST. Kobold Knight. \$4.00. WRITERS' BOOK CLUB is the exclusive American agent. A very fine book on the principles of plotting. Practical and helpful. Please Note: we have again succeeded in reducing the price. From the \$7.00 charged for it when we took over.

HOW TO WRITE FOR PLEASURE & PROFIT. Ed. Warren Bower. \$4.95. An exceptionally helpful, practical book with separate chapters written by big name experts.

REWRITE

DO YOU TELL "FAIRY" STORIES

One of the controversial themes in the juvenile field is that of the animal story. Is it necessary to be absolutely realistic? If so, what is "realism" since we don't understand how an animal thinks, or how much the domestic animal, such as a cat and dog, for instance, can comprehend of human speech or actions? Those who want to tell the tale in the easiest possible way, always point to a classic, "Peter Rabbit" for instance, or to "Alice in Wonderland" and say, "Well, there is a story that is not realistic." Perhaps worse, they point to some of the wretched & also badly written juvenile stories in which let us say a little brown bear wears a raincoat and spectacles, drives an automobile & does everything else that humans do.

It is perfectly true that there are tales to be found in every public library wherein human traits and characteristics are handed out to animals with a free hand. It can even be argued that children, or some children at least, like these stories. But it is also true that immoral adult stories or crime stories occasionally creep into circulation in public libraries, or are sold successfully in the bookshops to people who like this kind of reading. But does that make them desirable or models that every writer ought to copy meticulously?

In order to answer this question correctly it is necessary to examine the background of writing and selling. The first principle involved is that the child even more than adult readers gains a satisfaction from living vicariously the experiences of the characters he reads about. Also he reads enormous numbers of books, magazines, anything he can lay his hands on, in order to enlarge a very limited knowledge of the great world in which he lives. He learns as he reads.

This brings us to the second principle. A majority of the wisest teachers, librarians and parents believe it is unwise to let the child grow up too much in a world of fantasy. They say, "why teach a child that a lot of things that are not true, so that later he'll have to waste time unlearning things? It is mean and unkind to confuse a little child—by mixing up truth and fantasy. It is true, of course that many things are beyond children's conceptions of what is true and what is not. It is also true that a child usually can appreciate the distinction between a fairy story and a factually distorted story of present day life. For the fairy story is based on the first introductory moral principles where as the distorted story is simply an existing world turned topsy-turvy.

This brings us to the third principle. As in adult stories, you can do almost all you wish, if you have the magic wand of a "born story-teller" and are also crystal clear in laying down the rules of the game. If your reader knows that you are going to tell ab-

surd, impossible or funny stories, he'll go along with you because children have a good sense of the ridiculous, and they are learning almost as much by making fun as they do by looking at life straight. But it's a fact that for tired time just before going to bed, stories such as "The Happy Family" or "Funny Bunny" or even such a fantasy story as "The Night Before Christmas", is a better bet than one that spoofs, tears down or confuses instead of giving a comfortable sense of security, a chance to dream about the wonderful world that is opening up. His world.

In other words, there is a time and place for almost any type of story. But the writer who is smart will study his readers, and the adults who buy most of the juvenile stories. He will be practical, and he will insure so far as he can that his stories will fulfill a need. There is a great need always for the animal story that (1) enables children to understand the animal world, as one separate, but parallel to their own; and (2) that teaches them how to live and let live. We can't all be imaginative poets and write immortal classics such as "Bambi". Probably also, most of us would not care to identify ourselves quite so realistically all of the time with the inner life of animals.

Nevertheless, such a story makes stories, which begin, "Jimmy Muskrat jumped into his glossy convertible and streaked down Rt. 2", seem very silly. It is not a matter of "not talking down", but of giving dignity to the child's world. It is not a matter of giving the child a lot of wishy-washy moral teaching, but rather of being "natural". Remember that today children live in a world of scientific marvels that make even fairy stories seem tame and old fashioned. They also live in a world where ten-ton trucks, elaborate, mechanically miraculous fire engines, planes and other wonders are reproduced in a miniature scale model that does almost everything that the big ones do. very little is left to the child's imagination.

Therefore, it seems to me that the author who falsifies life for his child readers is not only committing a tactical error, but he is also losing a great opportunity. Only in stories and at the rare mother's knee can a child today capture that sense of wonder and mystery, that excitement in the face of God revealing himself through nature, which is, surely, one of the greatest gifts any child or story-teller can have. Our Billy Gee can tell us at the age of six how many complicated scientific miracles are performed. With his little x-ray eyes and a vivid imagination he can describe accurately in general terms places and things he has not yet seen. But we seek whenever possible to encourage factual observation of all growing, and living, facets of his expanding world. But how, pray tell me, can he increase that love of life, if he reads stories where jack rabbits form the crew of a jet-propelled plane? Be true to the spirit of your world of illusion!

REWRITE

FACTS WHEN YOU WANT THEM

One of the most valuable files we have at WCS House is a list of institutions and organizations. In each envelop there is to be found the name and address, and often a key member of the staff is mentioned. These are all alphabetically filed, frequently with a number of others under a uniform category—such as "libraries", picture sources, etc.. We have right at our fingers' tips information about most of the children's organizations similar to "Boys' Town".

One of the most important secrets of successful reporting is the ability to be able to put your finger on the kind of facts you need at the moment you need them. I have always liked the story about the reporter who was able to score a scoop when the news regarding the death of Scott following his discovery of the South Pole, was flashed on the news wires. This man was the only man in the United States, apparently, who knew that another great explorer, Ernest Shackleton, was then working in a cigar factory in Brooklyn. He got an authoritative comment from an expert before anyone else did.

I have been amazed since I began collecting names and addresses, how frequently the vital details are incorporated into news items and feature stories. In the course of a few years even the most casual reader ought to be able to gather a list of several hundred names. The street address is not always essential. For instance, this morning I saw a reference to the Edison Institute founded in Dearborn, Michigan, by Henry Ford to perpetuate the memory of his friend, Thomas A. Edison. However, it is well to get all data you can. So, when I see a reference, I scan the remainder of the article for any further information. If you have a fill-in ready to be read, it may save you hours of time & unnecessary letter writing to the wrong department. It is very easy to cut and file a great deal too enthusiastically and quickly. Take your time and save time.

DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

A writer complained bitterly to us short time ago about a certain editor who stamped her ms. with a time stamp and another editor whose office stapled a ms. In every editorial office there are sloppy mail clerks, and accidents will happen. But some editors display a woeful lack of interest in costly expense of time and effort they cause for a poor free lance writer. We are always willing to go to bat for writers, when we're informed of the precise details. We want to be told, too, so we can warn other writers.

But here is something you can do about it that will achieve results. When you receive a worn or soiled and mutilated ms., write to the top editor, or the one you have been in communication with. So be courteous; never be mad. When you have recopied the ms. send the

damaged front sheet to the editor. Never be aggressive, or go over the head of an editor—the first time. Be tactful and considerate so you will not close the market to the future ms. you may wish to submit. But be firm. Explain your grievance. Often, such a letter will do two things: (1) take care of the problem of damaged ms. and (2) it makes the editor more friendly to you the next time you send in a ms. Editors don't like to have their shop get a bad name. It hurts the circulation. They do wish to encourage writers they may want to depend upon a few months or years from now.

Incidentally, such a letter accomplishes a third result sometimes. It gives you a very good perspective on the character and quality of the editor you hope to deal with. A man or woman who takes a long time to write you back, who condones the damage or otherwise betrays the sloppy character of his office is not a good bet to do business with. Frequently you gain a valuable insight into the way an editor's mind works. A rejection may thus pay for itself many times over.

It takes only a few moments of your time, when a situation such as this arises, to report your disappointment. But by doing this you may save yourself and hundreds of other writers a great deal of future trouble. If enough writers would complain, many of your problems in dealing with editors would disappear. Here again, is a concrete example of the need for writers to work together. If an editor knew that a large number of us didn't like his ways of doing business, he would, I know, in many cases alter his methods.

Even though editors deal with individuals and many of you live in remote sections, it is possible for you to exert a profound influence upon the treatment of writers by editors. Suppose the 1,500 most active markets for ms. received 100,000 letters a year about the handling of ms. That would at the most represent only about two or three letters a year from every single active "freelance" writer. Couldn't you afford to write that many letters? Wouldn't you be impressed if you were an editor and received a proportionate share of that mail?

I have said to write a friendly letter. If the offense is repeated, or you get no better cooperation than a callous letter, there are other ways of improving conditions. You can write to the top editor, or, better yet, the publisher. Still polite, but firm. Tell other writers to do the same. Report fully, to REWRITE, to the National Writers' Club & the Authors' League of America, of Denver & NYC respectively. Tell the members of whatever writers' club or round robin you are a member of. Often a letter from an officer, a representative of numerous writers will have an effect. As a last resort, cut the market off your list and let the editor know. The MP (military Police) have a saying: "Ask 'em, Tell 'em, MAKE them!" You can if you want to.

REWRITE

NOW, HERE'S A TECHNICAL THEORY TO HELP YOU

In a simplified discussion of the principles of jet propulsion, I came across this:

"Every action has an equal and opposite reaction"...

(Newton's third law of motion is the basic principle of jet propulsion.)

To illustrate the principle the writer depicted a gun going off. There was the explosion of the powder, which at the same time: (1) thrust the bullet forward and (2) pushed the gun back against the shoulder of the hunter.

It occurred to me that this is an image a writer can use to make visual what happens, in terms of fiction, in a scene or story. A man sets up a spite fence. His neighbor reacts very definitely in one way or another. A heavy father tells his daughter she can't marry the man she loves. She reacts angrily or with tears, or she—elopes. One could go on, with innumerable illustrations.

The principle is clear: it is, however, a phase of dramatic conflict that many of us, in our befuddlement, do not fully appreciate fully. In a vague sort of way we know there must be a fight, but we don't apply the law that there must be two parties; that action and reaction occur just as much in human relations as in atomic relations. We do not, I believe, fully understand the fact that the reaction is definitely related to the action in the sense that grows out of the relation of two strong characters acting and reacting against each other.

I have spoken before in REWRITE of a sort of nuclear reaction, an endless chain reaction that a scene or story sets up. A character (A) stimulates another character (B); B reacts physically in terms of anger, love, hatred, lust or what-you-will; out of blind or instinctive reaction comes the emotional and intellectually determined response—which in turn serves as the thing that stimulates A. A stimulated goes through identically the same process and eventually stimulates B again. A story is simply a systematic chain reaction built around a situation that evolves, develops and ultimately reaches some kind of a satisfactory resolution.

At this point please notice that any such chain (1) must be continuous to be satisfying to a reader, (2) its character will inevitably be determined by (A) the plausible reactions that are true of all men or women under a given set of circumstances; and (B) the individual responses of the characters, as you set them up. In other words a person must be viewed both as a type and an individual. (3) From a purely technical aspect, an author is responsible for seeing that the reactions and responses build back into the atomic furnace, instead of shooting off in a

tangent. The sun or moon, for instance, following their regular cycle, will set up the usual pattern of action and response on the world. But should they suddenly diverge or diverge off into outer space, the whole solar system would be disturbed, thrown off & the normal cycle suspended.

We all of us tend to think of the universe as revolving around ourselves. We think—in terms of one strong character, whereas in a story the very existence of one character's objectives presupposes the existence of the blocking forces. We must therefore, characterize the persons on the other side of the fence, on the other side of the chain reaction just as ably, just as sympathetically, as we do the hero or heroine.

I have long thought of any story, any article, any piece of creative writing, or of communication at all, as a continuous "line of interest", to quote Somerset Maugham's idea. But, it seems to me, this principle of motion which implies two factors, or forces, as actively tied together in an endless system of action and reaction, with each making its own individual and characteristic "response" in turn and turn about, is a very original and helpful image.

GOOD NEWS ALONG THE WAY

The AUGUSTANA LUTHERAN, Rev. E. E. Ryden, Rock Island, Illinois, in answer to our letter stating that we had had complaints concerning their use of rubber time stamps for marking mss., replied: "This is true and we are grateful to you for calling our attention to the hardship it works on writers. We intend to discontinue the practice."

"You are correct in stating that we are overstocked on poetry. At the present time we could use a good serial story with definite Christian tone. We are pretty well supplied with other types of ms." (May 26th.)

STORY PARADE, Barbara Nolen, 200 5th Ave., NYC 10, states on its rejection slip its requirements: "tales may be modern or historical, American or foreign, serious or humorous, but they must have an appeal for children from 6 to 12. Serials are limited to 8,000 words, and other fiction: 500 - 2,500 words. True short stories (300-1,000), and verse, and short plays are also of interest to us. Payment on acceptance at 2¢ a word."

The GRADE TEACHER, Florence Hale, Darien, Conn., writes: "We prefer short stories—about 500 words or less."

Fred Fritch, 408 5th Ave., Brooklyn 15, N.Y., has a supply of back copies of writers magazines some writer can have for the asking. (Suggest you offer to pay postage.)

The Eugene F. Saxton Memorial Trust, Harper & Brothers, 49 East 33rd St., NYC 16, received very few suggested non-fict. projects.

REWRITE

REPORT ON THE FICTION WORKSHOP

Contest No. 2 attracted a much reduced and less exciting amount of competition. Indeed, there were only 5 mss. submitted, including one from England. As one contributor stated with some truth, "Interesting openings they are much easier to write than complete vignettes. I believe 500-word vignettes are the most difficult to polish and complete." I'm not sure that I agree. Certainly they are a fine length to practice on, and for the inexperienced writer to capture a check with.

Contest No. 5. For that reason we plan to reschedule the Short Short Story, 500 words or less. We will pay \$1 for the one we use, in the November issue. Closes: Oct. 10th. I hope there will be a lot of mss. submitted. Remember, you get comment in the Workshop & also on the ms., if you enclose return postage. Don't forget every entry in each contest must be accompanied by a criticism of a ms. that has appeared in the Fiction or Poetry Workshop.

Contest No. 3. The best Dramatic Scene of 150 words or less. Closes: July 10th. \$1.

Contest No. 4. The best Article Opening. A prize of \$1 for each one used in the September issue. Closes: July 25th. 100 words.

Don't forget the analysis of some fiction or poetry piece that has appeared in either of these Workshops. (There will be no award in the October issue, which has to be written immediately following the UNH Conference when there is a shortage of time & energy.) The analysis must be included with entries.

The Prize Story - YOUVE GOT TO LOOK AHEAD
Contest No. 2. Violet Wallin

What a partner, Annie! When I married her she liked her bit of fun, same as everyone: the talkies—movies it was in those days—dancing, a trip to the lake, week-ends. But I'd say to her, Annie, I'd say, why don't we sell the dollars away, eh? You'd like it as well if we just stay home and read, eh, honey? Then one of these days we'll make a real trip, say, Florida or even Europe.

At first she'd look at me kind of sideways and start to argue the toss. But in time I got her thinking my way, and soon the family began coming so she couldn't go out much.

Except for what we had to spend on the kids, which we kept to a minimum, we saved a lot, that way. Radios were getting to be the thing then. Annie threw out a hint or two that she wouldn't mind so much staying home, if she—could have one.

Now look, Baby, I said. You haven't forgotten that trip we're planning? The more we save now the sooner it'll come, eh? No sense wasting cash on a lot of small things. Better we save it for one big splash when we can

enjoy it.

Then there was the washing machine. Well, I reckon there were few women who kept their figure like Annie. Washing for four kids and two adults doesn't let the fat settle.

I know, I said, you'd get through the work quicker with one of these electric gadgets, but who wants to spend all their dollars on household stuff that'll keep 'em tied to the house because there's nothing left to pay for fun outside?

She was sensible about that, too.

You'll see, I told her, we'll have a wonderful time—later on. Besides, if anything happens to me I want you provided for.

Finally, Annie got so she could make a suit last longer than anyone I know. And at the end she'd cut it into pants for our youngest. A rare co-operative woman, and what a manager!

One of these days, I'd say to her, boy! are we going to have us a good time! All this time our bank balance was creeping up. I'd had a good many rises. It made me feel good, to look at my pass-book. Me? Well, you know how it is in business: you've got to spend to make a good impression. That's only sense.

What's that? Yes, well, as you say, I need a change. It's been a great shock, losing Annie. My plans? Oh, I'll go to Europe; have a gender at the Festival of Britain; then, come winter, I'll end up in Florida.

Pity Annie had to go and die like that. She sure would have enjoyed the trip. If she had outlived me she'd have been a rich woman. I'll miss her, but that's the way things happen, I guess.

The Analysis. Whatever you may think about this short short, it is interesting for several reasons. It certainly reveals the inner character of the MC. The double entendre treatment whereby the story says one thing, and means another is effective. The passage of time is a problem that is met & handled, perhaps not perfectly, but with a reasonable smoothness and steady flow of movement.

My criticism of the story is that it runs down instead of building up to a high point. It tends to repeat itself and build up monotony. Increasingly, the reader feels what a punch it would be if Annie were an active & dramatic instead of passive force in the action. Suppose the worm turned, the twist was capped by a second surprise ending in which Annie, the long suffering, did something to upset the selfish, comfort-loving existence of this frightened little man, who dared not take a chance. Suppose even though dead, she brought down upon his head, very innocently, his just deserts. Wouldn't the impact of the story be much greater? The "relish" sweeter?

Please turn to Page 16

REWRITE

"START CLOSE; KEEP IT ACTION"

We note a frequent tendency on the part of many fiction writers to start their stories much too far behind the climax. The result, therefore, is that the actual crisis doesn't achieve its full impact. How can it when in most of the pages of the ms. the author concentrates on laying the ground work for the conflict, and then sweeps the decisive act, the resolution of the dramatic conflict, away in a few pages?

Let me give you an illustration. We read a potential slick story about a fashionable wedding recently. It was the problem of the parents who had been divorced and now in order to observe the social amenities for the daughter's sake, were now being forced once more to meet. Of course they had never really fallen out of love, and so the technical feat for the author is to show them divided by their character traits, and then brought together through the perseverance and courage of the one who is selected for MC. It's a stock slick plot, but as the author stated in her letter to us, "originality, seemingly, stems not from the plot itself, rather from the author's illumination of it, in his or her own original way."

Incidentally, that is very true. A trite plot need not be wooden and so conventionalized & obvious as to be boring. If the author is moved by the humanness of the problem; if he individualizes his characters and yet brings out the universality of the drama, he can easily breathe life into a familiar and cliché plot by the warmth of his compassion for one human who is pulled in two directions by understandably divided loyalties.

To return to the matter of starting a story prematurely or too far away from the explosion. The wedding in this case is really the chemical solvent that precipitates that change in the elements which takes place. So the greatest possible drama would appear to lie in the few hours when the mother & father are forced to meet and, in a manner, relive or look back upon their memories. Even without the special premises being laid out for us, I think most readers would discover a certain ghoulish pleasure in watching the former lovers face each other. Will one of them be caught with his defenses down? Will they try to brazen it out, or will one seek to hurt the other out of revenge? Whatever the response, we will lick our chops, & eye the two victims with x-ray cameras of mind & heart. To a certain extent we ourselves will be living out the color and drama of such a situation. We will enlarge our experience by vicariously making the decision that is inevitable and inescapable. "There but for the grace of God go I." And it is not at all to be ghoulish, if we demand that the teller of the story give us every absorbing detail, & all of the overtones and implications.

But the author of this story we read as a

ms. did not do this. She started it several days before the wedding. We saw one of these two characters looking forward to the dread ordeal and wincing. Out of the emotion, the tension built up, came dialogue, scenes with the daughter and flashback scenes depicting the earlier action and reaction between the father and mother. We learned very thoroughly how the MC felt, and we were adequately, even sympathetically prepared for the inevitable outcome.

But so far as the actual drama of the two people, a man and woman who had once been in love, this was largely skipped over. Not until nearly 4,000 words of a 5,000 word story (approximately) did the secondary parent actually appear on the stage in the "living present" as against the "secondary present" of the flashbacks. And then the sequence of the wedding, the meeting and the changes of heart of the two parents were summarized in the relatively impersonal viewpoint of a story-teller standing outside the story & recording faithfully the events as he sees them unfold.

Perhaps I am a ghoulish, inhuman old story-teller. But for my money I wanted to see how those two poor, tortured souls respond, under the pressure of a social convention. I wanted to see what made them tick, & whether their character-traits would remain the same under fire. They had their beliefs & poses, their way of facing up to life. But I wanted to see if these would hold up or be subtly altered when nature or destiny, or what you will, played tricks with their lives, and they faced results of their previous decision. Every man who has faced live bullets, death, and the dangers of moral cowardice in Korea knows what I mean. In civilian life we constantly make decisions on the basis of that outer, unreal person we hold up to the world as us. But in a fox-hole and occasionally in everyday life when the sharp, sudden, unexpected crises hit us, the veil of pretence, and self-seeking is torn away. Then the real sterling or plated quality of the inner being, that "secret sense of self-importance, without which none of us can endure," as John Galsworthy aptly described it, comes out into the opening.

And that is the real reason for drama and story-telling. That is why readers clamor & reach for good fiction; why they go to baseball games and hang on the TV during crime-investigation hearings. They crave those revealing high points in life, when the character-traits of a man or woman as ordinary, as humanly fallible as ourselves are tested under the grinding millstones of fate. That is why there is no greater satisfaction than a great dramatic scene, when two worthy and powerful forces are locked in battle; when a great decision is made. So, begin close to it and make the issue clear as crystal. Then, SHOW and HOLD as long as you can the struggle, not in the mind of one character, rather in the action and reaction of two people.

REWRITE

NEWS, VIEWS AND HELPFUL HINTS

Charles H. Camidge, Canadian subscriber & helpful member of the WCS Family, suggests a possible article for an American writer for a Canadian magazine. He thinks that Canadians would be interested in what an ordinary American family is like. Summarizing all of the horrible misconceptions we offer of ourselves in radio, TV and movies, he remarks: "Surely there must be some decent, average-income, God-fearing, clean-living people in the States, or how could you accomplish all that you do?"

That is exactly what we at REWRITE always are pointing out. That is your largest public. It is under-written and frequently overlooked by blase New York editors. That is one reason why we moved to the country. Our loyalties and preferences are all on the side of the type of people Charley describes. To us it is important that Billy 'Gee ought to grow up among them. But many writers forget that not only are plain, good folk the best copy, as well as the best readers to try to hit, but also you are doing your country the best turn you can, when you write about decent folk instead of the gangsters, the sortid worldlings and drags of society.

JACK & JILL, Ada Campbell Rose, Curtis Publishing Co., Independence Sq., Philadelphia, wrote a member of the WCS Family in May that "We don't use much biographical material because most of it turns out to be too old for our readers. We are always glad to consider it, however." A long shot that might pay off.

The Federal Trade Commission has issued a complaint charging 11 manufacturers of book cloth with "combination and conspiracy to fix prices and suppress competition, with effect of 'substantially enhancing prices' & maintaining them at 'artificial levels'."

Recently, the English WRITER took a strong editorial position against attempts by English publishers to reduce the rate of writers' royalties. There have been sporadic attempts to do the same thing here. The WRITER pointed out that highly organized labor, and business firms (even if they were not in a position, as the FTC claims, to boost the cost of materials or publication itself, uniformly refuse to cut their share of gross receipts. Therefore, why should the author, who is largely unorganized, be the sucker?

Well, why should he?

Postal Rate Increases. We recently thanked Congressman Tom Murray (D., Tenn.) for a valiant attempt to freeze the Book Rate, so that it will not be raised along with other proposed new schedules in H.R. 2982. As we go to press this bill has not yet been acted upon and there is still time for writers to register their opinions. They should, because their interests will be seriously affected if the magazines, and even more, the

book publishers are forced to pay unfair additional taxes.

It seems a little silly for the Democratic administration to be so insistent on the Post Office balancing its budget while many other departments do not. Especially when a business-like use of more efficient methods and machines, and fewer political appointees would accomplish the same results. It would be interesting to know what effect the Boston scandal of men being paid, but not working, has had on the Post Office deficits.

REWRITE also called to the attention of Congressman Murray the plight of hundreds of so-called little magazines, which do not enjoy Second Class privileges, and therefore, are mailed Third Class, at a much higher mailing rate than the commercial magazines. Latter carrying large amounts of advertising, that is not available to the little magazines, & not doing nearly so good a job in developing the future authors of our country, ought not to be granted this subsidy by the tax-payers

Congressman Murray is chairman of the House Post Office & Civil Service Committee. Senate Bill S. 1369, introduced by Sen. Olin D. Johnston of So. Carolina, in association, it should be added, with Senators Douglas, Ill., and Dirksen, also of Ill., is also aimed at readjust Fourth Class mail rates fairly for books. The good work of all of these senators and Congressman Murray should be favorably commended by writers. If enough of you would write to your congressmen, and equally urge the other writers' magazines to take an interest in this matter, your checks and royalties, as well as opportunity to write, will not be jeopardized. Taxes, when high enough to drive the little magazines right out of print are one way to limit free speech. It will also greatly modify our future culture and intellectual strength. To date, REWRITE is practically the only writers' magazine to recognize this danger and actively protest.

"Kickback" on Eyeglasses. During the past month federal court action was finally gained by which 4 large optical supply houses in future are restrained from granting rebates to medical practitioners on the price of eyeglasses sold to their patients! (Nice way for professional men to earn a living!) It has taken 5 years to smash this practice and the federal attorneys say that if the equivalent of the rebates is not passed on to consumers the "grossest kind of profiteering" will result. The rebates averaged as much as half of the retail price. Obviously, this is a decision of vital interest to writers. Violators will be in contempt of the Chicago district court

Cooperative News Service of Chicago states it will supply lists of doctors involved in the editors' areas.

Feature Article Idea. The Greek Orthodox Church controlling the majority of the holy shrines in Jerusalem, will celebrate in Co-

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tober the 1,500th anniversary of its elevation to the status of the Patriarchate.

Stage Playwriting Contest, Alexander Monroe, 29 Portland St., Boston, Mass., has extended its closing date to Sept. 15, 1951. Authors' rights will be administered as per the recommendations of the Dramatist's Guild of the Authors' League of America. An entry blank may be secured as above.

HERE IS A FORMULA THAT WORKS!

We don't believe in formulas, but recently in two separate juvenile S. S. papers I saw the same type of stories. And it is not the first time that I have seen this form used. Actually, it was not a story, merely a fictionalized article. But it is a popular formula because it provides entertaining and at the same time educational reading for children. It also injects a special kind of excitement that appeals to adults and children equally.

What is this particular type of writing—so practical in its approach? It is the biographical dramatic sketch. The trick, which is legitimate and not especially annoying or unfair to the reader, is that the full name of the subject is withheld until the end of the sketch. Thus in the two pieces that appeared in the two magazines I happened to examine, the MCs were referred to respectively as "Isaac" and "William". In the last line you discovered that they were Isaac Newton, English mathematician, and William Cullen Bryant, American poet. Notice that both are in the range of a student's reading in secondary schools.

Biography is generally considered a staple part of the ms. inventory among juvenile editors. It is always welcome when it supplements the work done in school or widens horizons of living, and does it in terms which a child can understand. Thus, these two biographical pieces both pictured the subjects when they were still young men who had life all before them. They had not become famous or accomplished their acts of genius. They were facing the same problems other boys or girls today face. The dramatic scenes which the authors created threw a light upon what was accomplished later. It served to give a reader an insight and a perspective on that aura of greatness. The young reader in this way can see graphically how the character of the subject developed. He sees the seed and the tree in their proper relation. He gains courage and determination, and most of all, enthusiasm for helping nature to work a similar miracle within himself. "I can be like that," he says to himself. His eyes are in a way opened. Many of us forget the insecurity and confusion we felt when we were young and inexperienced. It is so easy to take the wrong path.

I suggest you read juvenile magazines with this angle in mind. You will see why dynam-

ic, eye-opening biography of this kind always is surely so popular. The reason is simple, of course. It tells a story and it holds up a hero. Youth is eager, unsullied and idealistic. Would that more of us oldsters could be inspired to keep it alive longer. Well, at least you can do your share, and improve your own morale at the same time by writing good biography for young readers. There is no finer, more enthusiastic or appreciative audience waiting for your offerings.

GREAT MEN CAST A SHADOW. USE IT

This past month Serge Koussevitsky died. I am not musically inclined, although I enjoy good music. But for most of the years of his stewardship as director of the great Boston Symphony Orchestra, I've gained pleasure and creative capital from sitting at his feet in a very real sense. Having observed at least three of the Orchestra's conductors as well as many visiting guest conductors, I think I have come to understand some of the reasons for his greatness, characteristics that are as necessary in a writer or a painter, in a word, in any creative artist, as in a musician.

Not everyone liked his programs. Does every successful story achieve universal popularity? But nearly everyone recognized his musicianship and his high integrity as an artist. He gave much and demanded much. I have seen him lay down his baton, stop the music and start a symphonic movement over again—when his orchestra was not functioning as he thought it should. I have seen him lay down his baton and with never a glance at his audience, wait for the noisy, insulting intrusion of late comers at a break to die down. I have seen him turn and with that Mephistophelean withdrawn smile acknowledge the applause of those same insincere patrons whom he so plainly did not admit into his secret inner world of music. I have seen him smile with touching pleasure when his audiences—on rare occasions—sublimely fused with his men, stamped their appreciation of a magnificently inspired performance.

Music was his life, his way of expressing himself and giving thanks for his creation. No one who ever saw these scenes, or the even rarer moments when the passion of his art led him to risk taking the spotlight away from one of his guest conductors by sitting in the audience, will ever forget how much music & the finest craftsmanship meant to him. But technique alone counted little for him. His devoted sharing of the rewards of fine work with his men and with the artists he offered the opportunity to appear with the greatest orchestra in the world, was an inspiration to all creative folk everywhere. Nothing mattered but music and the privilege of sharing it with musicians and an appreciative audience. He gave many music writers the opportunity to strengthen their wings, & show what they could do, had to say. Writers can learn what true love of one's art is from him.

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HERE IS A GOOD IDEA

Priscilla Brookman, a Canadian subscriber, offers a suggestion to members of the Family. She puts all the useful technical ideas she comes across on index file cards. These are filed under 5 categories: Beginning, Middle, Ending, Characterization, and finally, Devices Useful Throughout. Other sub-heads, of course can be used. "This helps more than one might suppose. You can have one specific item of technique before you for a quick reference. Everything that is pertinent can be there before you, on one or two or a few cards. These cards are also inconspicuous to carry around when you go out, knowing you'll have time to put in somewhere. Read one over ten times and think about it; you'll discover that its contents are really impressed on your mind."

She says, "I have about 70 cards in my catalogue and wouldn't want to sell them. Not for \$25, although I'd probably sell a duplicate set for that as fast as I could get it reproduced."

That sounds like a good idea. And as I can testify from actual experience, making some technical point a part of your instinctive, working mental and emotional processes, has from time immemorial been the only way anyone masters any art or trade. You can't use technique consciously. You can only use what is a part of you at the time you sit down to write. The sooner a writer learns that fundamental and contents himself with doing as good a job as he can each time, the sooner, I can promise you, he will start getting to be a better writer.

I have a saying I use very often: that we all are pitchers that constantly must be refilled before we can be poured from. And it is the same with technique. Every writer is required to alternate between filling up and then pouring. The only difference is that he soon finds that he can't take in more than one small increment of knowledge at a time. The point is, though, to keep filling the pitcher and let what will stick. Each time more.

THOUGHT & ACTION, Roy H. Hessen, Jefferson Ave., Amityville, N.Y., a small little magazine, states that it is "extremely friendly to beginning writers and is looking for anything good in fiction or non-fiction. There are no restrictions in size or subject matter, no taboos. Reports in a few days. Helps a writer to rewrite, or suggests better markets." The space is very limited and the editor has a unique system of payment: copies to published authors first time; a free subscription the second time; an author's biography or autobiography the third time; then cash payments. Mr. Hessen states that authors whose mss. they like on this progressive basis, tend to build up a favorable appeal, which gets them more consideration than "one time Charleys". This certainly is a friendly and unusual credo. We wish him well.

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Here are the acceptances reported to us in the past month:

Winona Nichols

2-part Serial: TODAY'S GIRLS.

Charles E. Ross

Poems: Hartford TIMES, Port. OREGONIAN, Beloit College Poetry REVIEW, Canadian Poetry, The Denver POST, Midland Poetry REVIEW.

S. Brainard Vinton

Article & Fillers: BOYS' LIFE.

Bessie Glen Buchanan

Poems: LYRIC, WINGED WORD, AMERICAN WEAVE, AMERICAN POETRY, WESTMINSTER, K.C. POETRY, Guest Editor, POET'S REED, CANDOR, etc.

Lucile Coleman

Poems: The LANTERN, The CHURCHMAN (2) & 2nd prize, Poet's Corner annual award.

Naomi M. Ingalls

Household Fillers: Boston Daily and Sunday POST.

Carrie Esther Hamill

Article: HOBBIES.

Poem: WAR CRY.

Thelma Carleton (Canada)

Articles: CANADIANA, FAMILY HERALD.

Helen Swift

Article: FARM JOURNAL.

Reprint: Hospitality Homes (published by Hot Point). (From Dec. WHC.)

Helen Langworthy

Story: HOME TOWN (Rexall).

Charles E. Ross

Poem: 1st Prize: Author & Artists Club, Tenn. (Lucile Coleman: 2nd. Hon. Men.)

Send in your "home runs & base hits".

A BREAK IN THE RANKS

SONG WRITER'S REVIEW. We regret to inform our readers that this magazine has recently discontinued its matching exchange of magazines with REWRITE, although we would gladly have continued it. SWR has fought ably to protect the rights of songwriters and we've actively supported it. Obviously, it doesn't reach all songwriters and we believe that in no other field of writing is close cooperation by those seeking better conditions for writers so necessary. We have sought especially here to make the CENTRAL MS. MARKETS FILE serve all writers on a non-commercial & non-profit public service basis. SWR's refusal to exchange makes our job more difficult. SWR is supported by advs. We are not. SWR has a fund to place it in the hands of libraries, editors, etc. We believe this change shortsighted. It's bound to hurt songwriters.

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Another minor discrepancy lies in the fact that the author, who is English, has made a reference to "dollars", but she uses a number of English phrases, such as "rise" where we would speak of a "raise". Similarly, English people or even Canadians would talk about a trip to the Continent, and they refer to America as "the States". The result is I am not sure where this story is supposed to be set. The characterization is also vague. To American readers the man's speech is almost suggestive of a Cockney dialect, yet he is obviously at the close of the story well to do, a very rich man and possibly a leading executive in some important firm.

A third and important problem arises from the ending, which needs a lot of work. Only there is any mention or use made of the unseen listener. He is brought in because the story-teller does not know how else to work over the plotted turn. But for our readers, at least, the Outcome of the story is given away much too far from the actual ending. A plant as to Annie's ill-timed death is given in four paragraphs from the end. Suspense is thus lost. In America we demand that a story be more "dramatic" and hold right up until the last line or two. That is, perhaps, one of the chief differences between American and English story-telling. Our pace has to be faster, tighter. There is more easy-going, leisurely. The result is that American stories will sell in overseas markets—all over the world, but their stories won't click here unless they work in the additional punch, the quickened tempo.

There is a lot of nice phrasing in this. Annie is revealed through the speech of her husband, and the ironical point of view taken by the author in depicting with "tongue-in-cheek" adroitness the MC's colossal misconception of his wife's thoughts, ideas, & ideals, is subtly pushed over. Such a sentence as, "She was sensible about that, too," is worth its weight in gold. It is not only a characterizing line that works both ways, but for sheer entertainment it is a wonderful deadpan laugh line. Elva chuckled, when I read it "straight".

To sum up, this is a dramatic sketch more than a story. In a workshop on character it would easily be an outstanding contender. A story needs more body, more complication, & more suspense held right up to the end.

There was one story submitted that gained the conventional short, sharp, sudden twist better than Mrs. Wallin's ms. Ann Vassar achieved a neat surprise in her story of two young lovers in a bar. The drunks looked at them enviously; they had everything. Everything, the bartender remarked, after they'd left, except that they were both blind. The story sent a shiver through you in spite of the fact that the lead-up to the punch lacked credibility.

The trouble was that the bar-hounds talk-

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ed the way the author needed them to in order to put the story over. Thus they didn't speak the way habitual patrons of a bar ordinarily would. And it is rather a "special circumstance", a coincidence, that two persons in an accident should both be blinded.

The point here is that a short short story is like an anecdote or a joke. And these are like a man diving off a springboard. To get a perfect dive, the man and the board & his approach from the solid land, must have a complete sense of functional connection, a sense of everything just dedicated to, leading up to the punch of that long, graceful dive. If there is any jarring note, the thing all falls apart. That is why the short short is so difficult to do properly.

As I have said many times in REWRITE, all story-telling in a sense is impersonal, detached teasing of the reader by the author. You have got to be so objective that you're able to know just how you are going to make the reader squirm and wriggle and laugh, or cry. You have to wheedle and coax and tease him, make him jump through your hoop the exact way you want him to.

Obviously, the short short because it's so brief, accentuates this whole phase of creative writing. You have to summon the skill and magic of story-telling. You have to make a reader believe in a little world of unreality. But you also have to set your stage, and make life unroll so convincingly that a reader does not see the wheels go round. It was that that Ann Vassar did not quite do. She strained a little too hard to set up her situation.

We had another story that depended essentially for its effect upon a pun. I happen not to like puns, probably because they are simply the bringing together of two similar sounds without benefit of any ideas or human relations. I recognize that as my weakness. But even so, I believe only exceptional story-telling ability can sustain a story on so slender a thread. We had another story the chief fault of which was simply poor timing and overstatement of the obvious. The author left nothing to the imagination of readers. Many writers throw in their "he said's" like explosive bursts of a machine gun. You need to work them in so that the reader has no real awareness that they are there. They serve their purposes of enhancing the color and advancing the story, or slowing it up—to milk dry a dramatic moment; but they never distract from the story itself.

Let's look at that over-statement of that thing we call the obvious. "He watched her step from the street car, smile, and walk—rapidly to meet him." Note the over-emphasis of physical detail, the lack of implicatory overtones revealing the inner details. "A few minutes later they were seated, at a rear table in the Lincoln Cafe, across the street." Dull and cataloguish, isn't it?